

## The Pope on Catholic Action

*Part of a recent letter from His Holiness to the Patriarch of Lisbon.  
Text supplied by N. C. W. C. News Service.*

THE apostolate is one of the duties inherent to Christian life. If one considers well, it will be seen that the very Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation impose—among other obligations—this apostolate of Catholic Action, which is spiritual help to our neighbor. Through Confirmation we become soldiers of Christ. The soldier should labor and fight not so much for himself as for others. Baptism, in a manner less evident to profane eyes, imposes the duty of apostolate, since through it we become members of the Church or of the Mystic Body of Christ; and among the members of this body, as of any organism, there must be solidarity of interests and reciprocal communication of life. One member must therefore help the other; no one may remain inactive and as each receives he also must give.

Now, as every Christian receives the supernatural life which circulates in the veins of the Mystic Body of Christ, that abundant life that Christ Himself said He came to bring on earth, so he must transfuse it into others who either do not possess it, or who possess it too scarcely and only in appearance.

When the fundamental truths of the Faith are well considered by the Faithful, We do not doubt that a new spirit of apostolate will take possession of their hearts and germinate into intense activity, since real life cannot be conceived without activity—for it is not only a manifestation but also a necessary coefficient and measure of life. And, please God, may this Holy Year of the Redemption, as it is our desire and hope, bring everywhere a renewal of Christian life. For this purpose We trust greatly to the contribution of Catholic Action, which, to Our great consolation, is being extended to and is becoming more fervent in every part of the Catholic world, including the countries of the missions, with evident benefits not only for the Church but also for civil society.

It is well understood that Catholic Action, like the Church whose direct collaborator it is, has not a material end but a spiritual one. Therefore it is in its very nature

that, like the Church, it keeps itself aloof and outside any political party, being no longer directed to safeguard special interests of groups, but to procure the real salvation of souls, diffusing as much as possible the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ in individuals, in families, in society and to unite under its banners of peace, in perfect and disciplined harmony, all those Faithful who intend to bring their contribution to so holy and so vast a work of apostolate.

However, this does not prevent each Catholic from taking part in organizations of a political character when they, in program and activity, give the necessary guarantees for safeguarding the rights of God and of their conscience. Nay, it must be added that participating in the political life responds to a duty of social charity, for the fact that each citizen must according to his opportunities contribute to the welfare of his own nation. And when this participation is inspired by the principles of Christianity, much good is derived from it not only for the social life but also the religious.

Therefore Catholic Action shall, though not taking part in politics in the strict sense of the word, prepare its soldiers to participate in political affairs, inspired with all the principles of Christianity, the only ones that may bring prosperity and peace to peoples. This must be, for it is not right that men who profess themselves Catholic should have one conscience in their private life and another in public.

There are many other activities, to which Catholic Action must dedicate itself; we shall say, rather, that no activity which is possible and useful to Christian life must be excluded from its program.

Among all these activities, however, there are some particularly urgent, because they respond to the greatest and most-felt needs. Among which We enumerate today the assistance to the working classes; and We wish to say assistance not only spiritual—which must always occupy the first place—but also material, through those institutions that have the specific aim of actuating the principles of social justice and of evangelic charity.

Catholic Action will then take care to promote these institutions, although it must leave to them a distinct responsibility and autonomy in things purely technical and economic. Its principal task will be always to see that they

derive inspiration from the principles openly Catholic and the teaching of this Apostolic See—a teaching that We have imparted in the Encyclical “*Quadragesimo Anno*” and which We now see to Our great satisfaction, taken as guide not only by the Catholic Action of various countries, but also by statesmen.

Nor is there in this anything substantially new, since the Church, whose Head is the Divine Workman of Nazareth, was always generous in aid and material assistance to workers, whom He drew through the force of His doctrine and His persevering work from the opprobrium of slavery to the dignity of brothers of Christ. Today she goes forward to meet the multitude of the humblest workers with especial solicitude; and not only so that these may enjoy those benefits to which they have right according to justice and equity, but still more so that they may be taken from the insidious and pernicious influence of Communism which, with diabolical perfidy, endeavors to stifle the light of religion in the world and exposes the workers to the sure danger of falling again in a more or less distant day into the same state of abjectness from which they had been laboriously raised.

For this reason the Church invited all her sons, priests and laity, and especially those who take part in Catholic Action, to help her in this most urgent undertaking, to safeguard in the face of such a terrible menace the spiritual and material benefits that the Redemption of Christ brought to all mankind and especially to the humble classes.

In a special manner, We repeat the invitation already sent the clergy in the above-mentioned Encyclical “*Quadragesimo Anno*,” namely that they without further delay but with resolute and harmonious will prepare themselves for this work of such urgent necessity for the salvation of souls; so that none of our sons who join with such spiritual danger in the ranks of the Socialists, may say to excuse themselves that they do so for their own interests, since “the Church and those who proclaim themselves her adherents, favor the rich, neglect the workers and give no thought to them.”

In order to achieve such a noble object it is also necessary that there should be presented to the masses (whose ignorance too often renders them an easy prey to wicked agitators) the light of Christian truth, which consoles every

grief, disperses every doubt, opens to every well-disposed mind the calm paths of Christian virtues and truths. Therefore, among the first and foremost tasks of Catholic Action is that of closely uniting the workers around their own pastors to assist in the work of evangelization in the teaching of Christian Doctrine, so that children may be given that fundamental instruction which should be their sure guide throughout all their lives, so that youth may be given knowledge of the Doctrine of Christ, so that adults may be shown that in the study and meditation of the truths taught by our Lord Jesus Christ they will find in every contingency of life the light, the comfort, and the strength of which they stand in need. Thus this generous *Catechist Apostolate* will be a very vast field open to the activity of good people, a most efficacious means to lead souls to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Another activity to which Catholic Action must attend with special care, is that of procuring and circulating a good press. When We speak of a good press We mean one that not only contains nothing injurious to the principles of faith, but is a proclaimer of its principles. Nor is it necessary to demonstrate what and how much is the educative efficacy of such a press, since daily experience demonstrates it well: as it demonstrates on the other hand the imminent evil being sown especially among young people by a bad press, which is often more widely circulated than the good.

Therefore, We express the desire that Catholic Action should succeed in obtaining a good press, which should be reinforced and multiplied as the need requires; and above all that it should enter Christian families: the paper that is the faithful echo of the teaching of the Church, thus becoming a valuable auxiliary to her.

## Philosophy and the Plain Man

REVEREND FATHER JAMES, O.M.CAP., PH.D., M.A., D.LITT.

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THE word *philosophy* tends to awe the plain man. It comes to him hoary with associations of aristocracy. Intellectual magnates like Plato and Aristotle are not likely to inspire confidence in one whose job in life is not thought or speculative enquiry. Little wonder that he is inclined to let philosophy go by, for "the poor make no new friends."

The average man need have no such misgivings. Philosophy, the thing, is much more homely than the word. "Homely" does not convey the true idea either, unless it signifies that philosophy is as much at home with the average man as it is with the aristocrat. There is a moment in the life of every individual when the philosopher in him awakens.

That moment strikes when for the first time a young man feels the need of answering for himself the questions that he was satisfied to put to others in his childhood. The conceit of opinion that comes with adolescence, the feeling of isolated responsibility, the desire to live one's own life, are things that bring with them a call to construct some kind of system, a philosophy of the universe. In this new vocation things thoughtlessly learned in childhood begin to assume significance, literature is cultivated for its vision and noble feelings, but, above all, the young man feels that he must begin to look out upon the world and upon the panorama of his life that stretches dimly out before him, no longer through the eyes of others but through his own in order to see things for himself.

Did he know it, such an individual is experiencing the awakening of the philosopher in him. If practical life and urgent necessities of existence do not crowd too fully or too insistently in upon him, sooner or later he will have achieved something like philosophy. Man is a link in the great chain of life. Above him are beings endowed with intelligence that

does not need an organism of senses; below him are those beings possessed of senses but lacking mind. In man there is a marriage of sense and intellect. Of this marriage was begotten philosophy as we know it. By means of his senses a man is brought into contact with a vast material world around him. This contact acts as a spur to thought and, when he tries to look out on the universe through his own eyes, a man is definitely faced with the task of interpretation. The world hands out its problems to him, and within him he feels the instinctive stirrings of his mind to solve them. The desire to know is natural.

That this desire does not burn brightly in the sanctuary of every human mind is no proof of its non-reality. Many are so hemmed in by daily occupations that they are scarcely conscious of their own desires. But let nature express itself, develop naturally, and from the little child to the old philosopher you will see the human mind actively in search of knowledge. Knowledge is the food of mind, its true aliment, and it hungers for it as bodies do for bread.

That great philosopher, Aquinas, who somehow, in these days, has become the friend of all men, was constantly emphasizing that the desire to know sprang from the very soil of human nature. From his Commentary on Aristotle we may select two of the fundamental reasons urged by him which seem to us of singular importance. Everyone will admit that things are naturally impelled to their own characteristic activities. It is as natural for bodies to fall through space as it is for the sun to shine or flowers to blossom. Ways and means of preventing these activities can be devised, of course. But that, naturally, when left to themselves, they will show themselves in typical modes of action and behavior is not thereby obscured or denied. It is exactly the same with man's desire to know. For it is precisely by thought that man is distinct from all other beings and occupies his place in the scheme of things. It follows that knowledge which is the result of a man's thinking will be something for which his nature craves.

The second reason assigned by St. Thomas is still more interesting and of broader significance. Everything, he argues, desires its own proper perfection and development. But it is by virtue of his possession of intelligence that man is what he is. As found in man, however, intellect in its

initial stages is imperfect. It needs to be fecundated by contact with reality before it can beget its ideas which result for it in knowledge. The imperfect human intellect advances in perfection, it grows and develops according as it grows in knowledge. There is accordingly in the human mind that general tendency of imperfect things which seeks and demands its proper perfection, knowledge. The desire to know is natural.

In developing this proof of the natural character of man's desire to know St. Thomas borrows from Aristotle a phrase of extreme significance. The phrase is a strong one and suggests that before man's knowledge the universe "is not." This must not be misunderstood. The universe *is*, of course; it exists independently of man's knowledge of it. But as so existing it is imperfect, its meaning is potential only, its message is dumb, unexpressed. Now it is precisely the privilege and dignity of man's intelligence that while being itself it can also "become" other things. "Being is twofold: material and immaterial. By material being, which is limited, a thing is merely what it is: this stone is just a stone and nothing more. But by immaterial being, which is vast and, as it were infinite (since it is not limited by matter, a thing is not only what it is but in some fashion other things as well." Man's intellect is immaterial; it can "become" other things. But the beauty of the Thomistic conception is that by "becoming" other things it not only realizes its own advance in perfection, but also imparts perfection to the material world itself. By means of knowledge the human mind plays a providential rôle, shedding on the darkness of the world its own light and expressing for creation the secrets that are in its breast. The human mind is mediator between the material universe and God: it is, as Aquinas forcibly puts it, the divinely appointed "remedy" for the imperfection of an order of things that permeates the human organism.

The various sciences are perhaps the first to strike us as an effort on the part of man to redeem the world from apparent chaos. In reality men were poets and philosophers before they were scientists. But in the modern man's approach to the world the sciences, which have made such progress since the sixteenth century, bulk very large. At one time it was thought indeed that these various sciences,



ultimately reducible to physical science, would, unaided, conquer the universe for mind. Today that vain hope has been interred for ever. All that can be said of the particular sciences, ranging from Physics to Psychology, is that they represent merely partial conquests. But no matter how successful or enticing the sciences may appear, the human mind will not easily surrender its birthright to explore not only the various approaches of the particular sciences, but will take all reality for its province. Sooner or later the student of science must feel cramped and fettered if his mind is not allowed to ask all the questions that the universe suggests. "The farther science has pushed back the limits of the discernible universe," writes the German philosopher, Eucken, "the more insistent do we feel the demand within us for a satisfactory explanation of the whole."

Philosophy is nothing more or less than the ultimate form which the desire to know, partially satisfied by science, inevitably assumes. It is the more embrative form of science, whose function it is, as psychologist. Wundt, expresses it, "to unify in one consistent system all the knowledge brought to light by means of the several special sciences, and to trace back to their first principles the methods in common use in these sciences and the conditions which they in common assume as pre-requisites to all knowledge." At the heart of this expansive and ever-widening desire of knowledge there is the instinct that reality is ultimately some kind of a unity in harmony. The world presents itself to all of us as made up of many diverse elements, yet it seems a universe, a One-in-many. Philosophy is simply that ultimate form which science assumes in its effort to seize this unity, to focus all the scattered rays of knowledge on the whole, and to think the universe in an all-embracing synthesis.

All that exists, as contemplated by the human mind [wrote Newman], forms one large system or complex fact. . . . Now it is not wonderful that, with all its capabilities, the human mind cannot take in this whole vast fact at a single glance, or gain possession of it all at once. . . . Or again, as we deal with some huge structure of many parts and sides, the mind goes round about it, noting down, first one thing, then another, as best it may, and receiving it under different aspects, by way of making progress towards mastering the whole. . . . These partial views are called sciences . . . they proceed on a principle of division of labour. . . . As they all belong to one and the same circle of objects they are one and all connected together; as they are



but aspects of things they are severally incomplete in relation to the things themselves, though complete in their own idea for their own respective purposes; on both accounts they at once need and subserve each other. And further, the comprehension of the bearings of one on another and the use of each to each, and the location and limitation and adjustment and due appreciation of them all, with one another, this belongs, I conceive, to a sort of science distinct from all of them and in some sense a science of sciences, which is my own conception of what is meant by philosophy.

This outlook on the world, which sees it as one great system, as a unity, is the unconscious possession of plain man and scientist alike. It is the demand that every thinking being makes upon the universe in which he lives. No matter how dwarfed he may feel before the massed forces of his world, no matter how abashed is he in presence of all its cosmic greatness, a man is greater than the world by the majesty of his thought. He can "think" the universe, contain it in his thought, and if his power of foresight and his capacity to utilize its forces for his own benefit is more immediately a guarantee of his greatness, the ultimate source of all his prerogatives is that by thought he possesses a secret unpossessed by the material world which makes of him, after a fashion, the dictator of the world's inherent laws.

Philosophy alone can supply the true credentials for this authority of man. Side by side with the varied and analytic studies of the sciences philosophy must stand to examine the very conditions of the meaning and intelligibility which the sciences presuppose to be present in the world and which no scientist has the time to examine. All knowledge, every knowing effort, whether of the plain man or of the scientist, postulates something about the world of which the plain man is sublimely unconscious and which scarcely interests the scientists at all. This something about the universe, without which there could be neither the humble knowledge of the man in the street nor the more pretentious science of the scientist, constantly occupies the thought of the philosopher. "Why there is order at all in the universe," says M. Bergson, "and not chaos is the main problem for a thinking mind."

"There is a deep-seated need in the human mind," very aptly writes another modern thinker, "the roots of which strike far beneath all other needs and interests. This is the need to feel at home in the universe. From this source spring all philosophies." In a world that is thought of as radically

chaotic, a plaything of gods with human passions, the result of blind capricious chance, disjointed and disordered, there is absolutely no question of feeling at home. The average man unconsciously makes himself at home, the scientist treats his world with a familiarity the offshoot of which is his power of foresight, and when both awaken to ultimates they must become philosophers or be satisfied to sleep in their unconscious, though very comfortable, positions. Philosophy is simply an effort to awaken fully, a courageous attempt to face *all* the problems, to think them out to the end, even with the chance that there will be no end, so far as full and final comprehension is concerned.

It is not the way of knowledge to build itself up piece by piece. Psychologists are becoming more conscious day by day that knowledge is an affair of first impressions that are global or structural in character. The child has a terrifying impression of an ugly face before it grasps the details that go to make or mar such a countenance. Knowledge, in fact, progresses from the abstract to the concrete, instead of going from the concrete to the abstract; it takes all in at once, the details come later, like stars that emerge from the background of the firmament at night. At the back of all man's efforts to know there is the like-impression of the wholeness of the universe. It is this impression, this feeling of being at home in the world, which ultimately is the source of all human knowledge. But as this elementary feeling is already an instinctive philosophy, the source, as that modern writer puts it, of all philosophies, it is abundantly evident that instinctively the plain man and the scientist are philosophers.

Every attempt to know, no matter how humble or limited it may appear, is inspired by this instinctive faith in the ultimate ordering and harmony of reality. The scientist simply cannot abide by isolated facts, no more than Newton could when he thought of gravitation, and he is ever anxious to reduce experience to certain periodicities, recurrences, or laws. Taken all together, the sciences are a concentrated attack on isolated facts in an effort to conquer the realm of apparent chaos, an attack inspired by instinctive faith. But the plain man, in his simplest judgment, employs the self-same instinctive faith. His humblest affirmations have reverberations throughout the universe at large.

There is a whole philosophy, in fact, in every single human judgment.

For fear of making this abstruse let me remind the plain man that in every effort to know an attitude to the universe is implied. That attitude is one which demands that there is order and meaning in it. For if reality as a whole had no meaning, then no particular aspect of it could enlighten. Every effort to know is inspired then by an attitude to the whole, which is simply what is meant by philosophy. Every act of knowledge is an instinctive philosophy in action. What that philosophy will be is another question, but for the moment it is clear that a philosophy is in question.

If we take a single judgment, such as "chalk is white," we are affirming something (whiteness) of something (chalk). To put it bluntly, we are affirming being, or something that appears real of something real. From first to last the plain man's thinking is about being of some kind. Even when he thinks of "nothing" he has affirmed being twice over, first, that it is, and then, that it is not. But to affirm being is to take up a position in regard to all reality, for beyond being evidently there is nothing. In every act of thought, of knowledge, then, the plain man must plead guilty to a philosophy, to an instinctive philosophy.

That this instinctive philosophy may be justified is not difficult to see. But in that justification a man must pass from unconscious to conscious philosophy. For this "being" which is in question must be intelligible and have meaning. For if being is meaningless, then all things necessarily are devoid of meaning, since they belong to being. Either being is knowable, therefore, or nothing can be known, for everything that is known must be grasped as articulated being or some form of being. It is one thing, of course, to say that reality is knowable and must have meaning, and another to hold that the human mind is just the one intelligence destined to exhaust that intelligibility and meaning. To put it another way, it is one thing to know that reality can be known, and another to claim to know the whole of it.

Some years ago it was fashionable to take refuge in Agnosticism. The agnostic usually was not one who confessed he did not know, but who went much further, and said that reality could not be known. The chief realities exclude

were the real nature of things themselves, the immortality of the soul, and God. Kant was a philosopher of the unknowable, as was also Spencer. The modesty of Agnosticism was false and ultimately suicidal. For if the real is naturally unknowable, then nothing could be known. And if a limited intelligence did not know the real, especially that form of it associated with physical science, this was no ground for saying that the real was in itself unknowable. If reality is unknowable, then nothing can be known at all. Is reality so unlike itself as to resemble itself in absolutely nothing? For that is the pretension of the Agnostic. To say that there are regions of reality beyond human experience which are utterly unknowable is to say that being is so unlike itself as to be not itself, entirely equivocal in meaning. But being must be itself, no matter what demands that theory will make upon the human intellect so prone to deal with the monotony of univocal concepts. I am not now going to open up the difficult question of the analogical significance of being, except to reiterate that every step in the conquest of the universe by knowledge involves an implicit faith that the universe can be known. Plain man and scientist will, and must, grant that.

The conclusion then seems warranted that the only alternative lies between a philosophy that is instinctive or unconscious and a philosophy that is conscious. If a man wants to be fully human, if he thinks at all, then he must choose the latter alternative; he must let his thinking light up, as far as possible, his fundamental attitudes. Whatever about the poet, the philosopher is not born, he is man in the making. If there are not more philosophers amongst the plain men the reason is that the race of real men, under the pressure of economic needs and other obstacles, is disappearing from our midst. Towns and cities are crowded with individuals who prefer to be gabardined in patches picked up at random from the Press, the radio, the public orator, than clad in the rough homespun of their own thinking.

It is related of the old Greek philosopher Diogenes, that he was once observed traversing the streets of Athens, armed with a lantern, as he searched the market-place for something. As he raised his lantern to the faces of the passers by, one curious person asked him what he sought. "I seek

a man," replied Diogenes. But was he not surrounded in that market-place by men of every type and condition? Purple-clad nobles and humble artisans passed beneath his lantern. The story is pathetically human, for, whatever the intentions of Diogenes may have been, there is a point in it. If it is just his capacity for thinking that marks off man from the rest of creation, just as it is the necessity under which he labors to multiply his thoughts and reasonings that differentiates him from God and angel, then man can be fully human only when he has begun to think for himself and allows the sleeping philosopher in him to come to life.

Philosophy is a human thing: it is a necessity for the human spirit. As Aristotle argued, either a man wishes to philosophize or he does not. If he wants to, then do not stop him. But if he does not wish it, he will have to all the same, if for no other reason than to show he need not. Whether he will it or not then a man is forced towards some form of philosophy, and without knowing it, like the character who spoke prose unwittingly, every man is a philosopher. But it is a sorry compliment to any man to tell him he is what he knows not himself to be: the unconscious in man's attitudes has always brought upon it the satire of society.

As first employed, the philosopher was looked upon as a friend or follower of wisdom, which the Greek word for philosophy evidently conveys. Subsequently philosophy came to stand for wisdom alone. Now wisdom has never narrowed down its connotation to science or knowledge only, it has always embraced an attitude towards life and conduct. In so far as this is so, the concept of wisdom brings philosophy nearer to the plain man. There may be some excuse for his failing to grasp the philosophic import of his efforts to know, but there is no escape from the philosophy implied in his efforts to live. The task of life is not the monopoly of philosophers: it is for all. Every man is involved by it and every man must have sufficient light to guide his steps. If he take a step at all he must move in some direction, and since every man is moving, the direction of his goal is implied in every step. Man's every action, in a word, is inspired by a philosophy of life and by a faith in the meaning of human life as a whole.

## St. Thomas Aquinas and the Modern Catholic

REVEREND DR. JOHN K. RYAN

*A sermon delivered in the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, March 7, 1934.*

*The author teaches in the Department of Philosophy at the Catholic University of America.*

THERE is for us today, if we reflect upon it, an irony as well as a propriety in our celebration of the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, patron of all Catholic schools. Naturally and necessarily, both irony and propriety arise from the same source. They spring alike from the contrast, no, from the contradiction, the conflict, that exists between the character and life, the mind and achievements of the saint whose day we keep, and the modern situation in which we find ourselves. And both irony and propriety arise as well from the fact that we who celebrate this anniversary of a thirteenth-century saint are twentieth-century Catholics, men and women who are one with St. Thomas in religious belief and practice but at the farthest remove from him in time and environment.

Consider. Today we live in a world that is in many of its large generative causes, its actualities and its probable immediate future, a realization of doctrines and ideas that may well be called anti-Thomistic. It is a world that has put its trust in the things of matter. It has given evidence in almost every land of an intolerance of liberty and independence of thought and action. For the most part, it is either hostile or indifferent to the truth that makes men free—and indifference has well been called a cold and silent form of hate. Despite the lessons of the past, its reliance is still on violence and ruthlessness both within and outside the State. It is governed not by reason and by a friendly and unhindered commerce of ideas and traffic of ideals, but rather by emotion and passion, by suspicion and distrust, by greed and fear and hate. Its morality is that of expedience and of power, without recognition of any higher source

than that of opinion, desire or advantage. "And you shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil" is the modern affirmation. In it is the sum of the modern hostility to the supernatural, to religion, to the Church, to Christ, to God. There was a philosopher who may be called the fulfilment and the collapse of modern thought. By reason of the disorder of his mind and the tragedy of his life, he was both prophet and precursor of the present disaster. Is it not of the deepest significance that he wrote of Anti-Christ and proclaimed that the greatest of modern events was the death of God?

Thus it is in the midst of an almost triumphant resurgence of plans and passions abhorrent to all that we know St. Thomas to have been that we come to honor him today. We strive to recall, if only by way of vivid contrast, what it was that he presented in his teaching and represented in his life. In the face of the dissolving and disintegrating forces of these latter days, we see St. Thomas in his essential character as saint and sage. He was the realist, striving dispassionately and objectively to see things as they are in themselves, in their eternal setting and in their universal frame. Of him more truly than of the greatest of Greek dramatists can it be said that he "saw life steadily and saw it whole." His eyes saw not only the reality of the things that are, a reality often base and mean and unworthy of life; his eyes saw also the higher, more genuine and most lasting reality of what ought to be and of what can be. Thus he could turn his gaze, for instance, upon the fact of war; could discern its innermost moral character; could state with the sureness and finality of authority the principles that determine a just war. So complete and so final is the resulting formula that it is only in our own time, when war approaches its absolute and total form, that the full meaning, validity and cogency of the Thomistic ethic become clear.

Because St. Thomas was a genuine realist, he was also the intellectualist and the spiritualist, proclaiming the supremacy and ultimacy of mind. So also is he the philosopher of order, of design, showing us that every form of our present surrounding reality is a path, a way, that leads our finite minds to a knowledge of a Mind infinite and eternal. Being the realist of thought, he unites past and future: he is the conserver and yet the innovator, the traditionalist and yet the pioneer. Thus he shows himself the master of that



rarest and most difficult mode of thinking, the way of integration and synthesis, the way of the man who is the producer, the builder, the creator. All this he is in his thought because in his character and life he is "the scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven" who "is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old."

To apply these words of our Divine Saviour to St. Thomas, to call him "the scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven," to say that he brings forth "out of his treasure new things and old," is to say that St. Thomas is the man of action as well as the man of thought. His ideas were not inchoate, formless, unrelated—half-thought, as it were. They were formed and finished and integrated and were given inevitable utterance. Of that utterance clarity, directness and fulness are the marks. Such marks are both an evidence of the perfection and finality of St. Thomas's thinking and an indication of the character that was the cause of both thought and expression. St. Thomas was no sterile and unproductive scholar, living in a world subjective and only partly real. He was the energetic and determined man who had conceived a great work, had perceived the difficult but necessary means leading on to his end, had aroused his will to effect that most difficult of human deeds, the execution of a great work to its last successful issue. Hence the "Summa contra Gentiles," the whole series of works that is the "Summa Theologica," the commentaries, the works on intellect and truth and all the rest. Because of his grandeur of conception, his versatility and his mastery of the tools of his craft, Aquinas is the Michelangelo of thought. There is a further likeness. The titantic figure of art falters or loses interest, suffers frustration or is turned to other things before he finishes so many of his great works. Witness his statue of David, his Medici monuments, his tomb of Julius II. In somewhat similar fashion St. Thomas also paid the penalty of too great a genius and suffered from the inevitable and importunate demands put upon his talent, time and toil. As a result, in too many of his great projects was he kept from following his own relentless way to their completion.

Man of thought and action, St. Thomas is something more. The story of this philosopher's life is a record of

heroic sanctity. His inner spiritual life, inseparable from his career of intense thought and intense activity, made so deep an impression on his age that not fifty years after his death he was proclaimed a saint. Being the saint as well as the thinker and worker, he was the mystic, too. The vision and the words of his last days alone are enough to tell us this, for he said: "I can do no more. Such secrets have been revealed to me that all I have written now appears to be of little value." Here in truth is the complete Catholic: theologian and sage—the man of study and reflection; writer and teacher—the man of will and action; poet and mystic—the man of vision and ecstasy; priest and saint—the man of heart and feeling, of love for his fellowmen and for God.

Thus it is in his character as the complete Catholic that St. Thomas appears to us across seven centuries. As such he is of more than antiquarian or historical interest. For us today, so far from him in time and place but one with him in faith and in our essential aims and hopes, St. Thomas is a figure of profound and actual meaning. The very fact that in this alien age he is remembered and honored as the complete and representative Catholic speaks to us both in warning and encouragement. If St. John Damascene saw God as the illimitable ocean of being, we may think of St. Thomas as seeing the Church of God and its doctrine as the illimitable ocean of truth. From that ocean he drew, not exhausting its infinite depths of meaning but bringing forth such treasures as may be found in the vast library of his written thought. The source of his inspiration, the unfailing well-spring of all his knowledge and wisdom, is still with us today. Its depths of meaning are still illimitable and inexhaustible, but they are easier now to draw from after the efforts and successes of Thomas of Aquin.

It would be abhorrent, almost sacrilegious, to think of St. Thomas in the rôle of the opportunist of thought, as one willing to secure his integration of the new and the old by a single, least, unworthy compromise. Not by understanding, not by restricting, not by minimizing the force of Catholic doctrine does St. Thomas live. He lives because he sought for the most that was in that doctrine and stated it as something highest and best, as something absolute and ultimate. So with ourselves. It is to Catholic doctrine, to that boundless sea of truth, that we must turn if we are ever to repeat

the successes of St. Thomas upon no matter how small a scale. If we are to have within us any intellectual life and any of the force and vigor that come only from life, it must be our will and our effort to express the complete and therefore the genuine meaning of the Church's dogmas. Those doctrines are falsified if put in any way except what may be called *the Thomistic way*, and it is only by giving them such expression that we can make their influence felt. Our world is hungry for the truth that it does not know; it even fears the truth without which it dies. To that world we do a strange service if we offer it not the full and final truth as we know it but some watery dilution, some timid half-truth that is despised and rejected for the bogus thing that it is. "Or what man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? Or if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent?"

Particularly in times such as these does the example of St. Thomas tell us what is our first and greatest duty to the Church and to our fellowmen. That duty is to give to the modern world the full truth that we possess and know. No one who has eyes to see can be blind to the fact that we live in one of the great critical times of history. Now our race is facing in new directions; new ambitions and new goals are being chosen for it. Is it licit, is it even possible, for us in a great crisis like the present merely to accept what is imposed by others? We are in duty bound to think in accord with the mind of the one true and universal Church. Can we think for a moment that it is for the Church in modern times to be content with adapting itself to conditions fashioned by alien and even hostile forces? No, it is according to the essential character of the Church not merely to adapt itself to changes that are forced upon it, but rather to direct and to dominate and to change the face of the earth. It is a living Church, living with the very highest kind of life, a life that is intellectual and volitional, moral, spiritual, divine. Such life is not destined to be the passive victim of a nether world or of this world; it is destined to produce, to create and to triumph. And for us who are in a measure the instruments that the Church must use, a time of crisis is a time of opportunity as well as one of especial duty, a time of speaking and writing and living the fulness of Catholic truth. Only in this way can we share in

that supreme work of helping the Church to influence the future course of events.

In the midst of a disaster and crisis like the one in which we live, we may well turn for example, advice and authority to St. Thomas, who sought always to know and express the fulness of the truth. He may be heard to say, "Behold the Catholic opportunity! Do not be content with the easiest way, the way of accepting as inevitable and making the poor best of a lot fashioned by those to whom *you* should be bringing the light of truth. See now to it that Catholic truth makes itself felt as a decisive force in the formation of a new world." So also can we picture St. Thomas as pointing out the flagrant and significant contradiction between a modern dogma and a modern fact. It is a characteristic doctrine of our world that the material cause is the only genuine cause, that economic determinants are the sole and inexorable determinants of human events. Yet now as always, perhaps more now than ever before, can we see that it is not material things but ideas that rule mankind. Today it is minds—intellects conceiving goals and discerning paths; wills putting plans into execution—that are determining the fate of men and nations. These minds are not disembodied; they are resident in living men and women who know what they want, who prize their goal enough to put forth the great efforts that alone can achieve great effects. That, too, is our urgent and essential duty. As children of Holy Mother Church and as workers in her cause, it is our task to make clear and explicit in our own minds what is the relation of Catholic truth to the modern world and what are the means of bringing that truth to bear on the formation of a new order. It is our further task to summon up all our resources of will and strength to bring those plans into reality.

This is a more than human task, and it is one that will be finally accomplished only in God's time and by the action of the divine grace that we humbly and contritely beseech. The ultimate victory of the truth, however remote it may be, is sure; but neither its certainty nor its remoteness relieves us of our own individual, immediate and obvious duties. It has been well said that we have not been given the task of securing the triumph of the truth but only of fighting in its behalf. That thought is suggestive and encouraging and wholly in accord with the mind and life of St. Thomas him-

self. In giving our own poor services to the cause of the truth, we who have chosen the things of the mind can do no better than turn for counsel to him who has been named patron of all Catholic schools and studies. Much less than a century ago Père Gratry could write: "St. Thomas is unknown to us because he is too great." For us of today his greatness is the compelling reason for our turning to him. Greatness marked St. Thomas in all things, in his thought and faith, in his work and in his reward. It is often told, and it will always bear retelling, that Christ Crucified once said to him, "Well hast thou written of Me, Thomas; what reward wilt thou have?" "None, Lord, but Thyself!" came the answer. Only in a philosopher who can speak such words, only in a philosopher found worthy of such a reward, will we find doctrines that will bring something of light and hope and peace to a driven and tormented world.